Our aim is to understand if myth has been directly affected by the digital revolution and to what extent it has retained its original essence or whether it has mutated to new forms.

These articles tackle films and television series that devote a considerable part to the impact of transcendence in our lives. They show that myth continues to be a particularly suitable tool for the knowledge of our society and of ourselves.

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Cover: Carmen González Castro (image: Duna Gant)

Myth and Audiovisual Creation

José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb (eds.)

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Preface

This volume is intended to test the resilience of myth. In past ages, mythic narrative has undergone several adaptations to new formats: from theatrical or epic representations to plastic image and the musical sound. Painting and sculpture, on the one hand singing and instrumentation on the other, have offered new supports to which the history of relationships between men and deities has had to conform.

Nowadays, myth has also had to adapt itself to new formats distributed by analogical media (radio, cinema, television). In recent decades, the irruption of digital media has caused a tension of unexpected dimensions, especially for the global access of the spectators and the audience. Today, films, series, comics or video games, produced by corporations or smaller companies, with major ramifications in science fiction, fantasy and artificial intelligence, are subject to social or individual consumption in unprecedented circumstances. This current situation is cause for reflection. We need to understand if myth has been directly affected by the digital revolution and to what extent it has retained its original essence or whether it has mutated to new forms.

We will do so from a cultural myth-criticism approach (on which J. M. Losada will offer a monograph in 2020). Together with the attempts to pseudo-mythify historical figures, romantic ideas or metaphors of contemporary society, we are also currently witnessing an artificial inflation of "myths", sometimes due to the fascination of the term or to poor vocabulary. Cultural myth-criticism proposes its own hermeneutics (study of the relationships between the authentic mythical narrative and the shaping factors of contemporary culture: globalization, immanence, consumerism), aimed at expanding the deep knowledge of the current plural and disconcerting world, through the reception of myths in literature and the arts. Perhaps myth (where our past and future are concentrated *in nuce*) also contains today a valid interpretative key of the new individual and collective consciousness.

The articles of this volume have been written by quality researchers selected from several universities in Europe and America. They tackle successful films and television series that devote a considerable part to

the impact of transcendence in our lives. These articles use an innovative methodology based on the real nature of the contents of fiction: in other words, they sustain that the represented history has its own true life. Moreover, they show that myth continues to be a particularly suitable tool for the knowledge of our society and of ourselves.

José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb

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Myth and Audiovisual Creation continues the reflection started a decade ago in the following volumes:

> *Myth and Emotions* (edited by José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb), Newcastle upon Tyne (UK), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 345 pp. ISBN: 978-1-5275-0011-2.
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> *Mitos de hoy. Ensayos de mitocrítica cultural* (edited by José Manuel Losada), Berlin, Logos Verlag, 2016, 211 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8325-4239-9.
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> *Myths in Crisis: The Crisis of Myth* (edited by José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb), Newcastle upon Tyne (UK), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, 441 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4438-7814-2.
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> *Nuevas formas del mito. Una metodología interdisciplinar* (edited by José Manuel Losada), Berlin, Logos Verlag, 2015, 221 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8325-4040-1.
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> *Mito e interdisciplinariedad. Los mitos antiguos, medievales y modernos en la literatura y las artes contemporáneas* (edited by José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb), Bari (Italy), Levante Editori, 2013, 458 pp., 80 illustr. ISBN: 978-88-7949-623-0.
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> *Myth and Subversion in the Contemporary Novel* (edited by José Manuel Losada & Marta Guirao), Newcastle upon Tyne (UK), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, 523 pp. ISBN: 1-4438-3746-6.

Mito y mundo contemporáneo. La recepción de los mitos antiguos, medievales y modernos en la literatura contemporánea (edited by José Manuel Losada), Bari (Italy), Levante Editori, 2010, 785 pp., 45 illustr. ISBN: 978-88-7949-547-9. International Research Award "Giovi-Città di Salerno" (Italy).

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Prefacio

Este volumen está destinado a comprobar la resiliencia del mito. En épocas pasadas, el relato mítico había conocido diversas adaptaciones a nuevos formatos: de la épica o el teatro a la imagen plástica y al sonido musical. La pintura y la escultura, por un lado, el canto y la instrumentación, por otro, ofrecieron nuevos soportes a los que hubo de acoplarse la narración de relaciones entre los hombres y las divinidades.

En la época contemporánea, el mito también se ha ido adaptando a los nuevos formatos distribuidos por los medios analógicos (radio, cine, televisión). En las últimas décadas, la irrupción de los medios digitales ha supuesto una tensión de inesperadas dimensiones, no tanto por la calidad de las imágenes y los sonidos como por el acceso omnímodo de los espectadores y la audiencia. Hoy, películas, series, cómics o videojuegos, producidos por grandes compañías o empresas unipersonales, con ramificaciones ingentes en la ciencia ficción, la fantasía y la inteligencia artificial, son objeto de consumo social o individual en las circunstancias más dispares. Esta situación actual demanda una reflexión. Queremos saber si el mito se ha visto directamente afectado por la revolución digital; en qué medida ha conservado su esencia originaria o ha mutado según nuevas formas.

Lo hacemos desde la mitocrítica cultural (sobre la que J. M. Losada ofrecerá una monografía en 2020). Junto a los intentos de pseudomitificación de personajes históricos, ideas románticas o metáforas de la sociedad contemporánea, asistimos hoy a una artificiosa inflación de "mitos", unas veces por fascinación del término, otras por pobreza de vocabulario. La mitocrítica cultural propone una hermenéutica propia (estudio de las relaciones entre el auténtico relato mítico y los factores configuradores de la cultura contemporánea: la globalización, la inmanencia, el consumismo), encaminada a ampliar el conocimiento profundo del mundo actual, plural y desconcertante, a través de la recepción de los mitos en la literatura y las artes. Quizá el mito (donde se concentran *in nuce* nuestro pasado y nuestro futuro) contenga también

hoy una clave interpretativa válida de la nueva conciencia individual y colectiva.

Los artículos de este volumen han sido escritos por investigadores de alta calidad escogidos en varios países de Europa y América. Abordan películas y series de televisión de gran éxito que dedican una parte considerable al impacto de la trascendencia en nuestras vidas. Utilizan una metodología innovadora basada en el carácter real de los contenidos de ficción, es decir, sostienen que la historia representada tiene su vida propia y verdadera. Muestran que el mito continúa siendo un medio particularmente apto para el conocimiento de nuestra sociedad y de nosotros mismos.

José Manuel Losada y Antonella Lipscomb

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Myth and Audiovisual Creation prosigue la reflexión comenzada hace una década en los volúmenes siguientes:

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Introduction

Myth and the Digital Age

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1. The Digital Revolution

Image and sound: two of our five external senses are called into play.

We reduce the immense variety of images to a typology: the more traditional –the image that represents an expected reality– and the more innovative, the image represented by a series of unforeseen associations with no real previous referent. Both images coexist in our imaginary world, and both can replicate (for example in a drawing, a painting, a sculpture) in the real world. We call it visual creation when, in the latter case, an image is coupled with an artistic dimension[1].

The same observation can be made about the immeasurable variety of sounds, with the peculiarity that sound only exists in the real world, save a few exceptions (some with a pathological origin). This "lack" of sound is compensated by the richness of the voice and by using utensils –or instruments, in the case of art– to generate noises. As with images, we call it audible creation when sound generation is coupled with an artistic dimension.

This preliminary observation brings us naturally to the Aristotelian principle of mimesis, i.e. human creations (literature, visual arts and entertainment) as imitation, even when what is depicted does not seem to resemble the model. To a large extent, audiovisual creation is a re-creation of the world from images and sounds.

Audiovisual creation has undergone a spectacular change since the early 20th century: traditional forms (drawing, painting, sculpture, etc.)

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[1] From a literary perspective, the image as evocation provoked by unforeseen (and, in certain cases, hallucinatory) associations ended with the 19th century symbolist revolution and its 20th century avant-garde counterparts; see Gabriel Germain, *La Poésie, corps et âme*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1973, p. 217 *et sq*.

are now joined by cinema, whose exponential growth requires no explanation.

However, we have witnessed a new revolution since the turn of the century that entails an even greater change in terms of the standardization of content and the versatility of formats. Before, audiovisual creation had to adapt itself to the format: the drawing or the sound, crafted by hand, were retouched and put together later with digital resources. Since the digital revolution, the format easily adapts to the audiovisual creation: drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, theater, opera, cinema, video games, performances, installations and other genres are unthinkable without the support of digital resources.

Cinema –the Seventh Art– has always been intimately tied to technological advances. However, the digital revolution carries more weight than the historical incorporation of sound, color and television, comparable only to the advance from writing on stone to writing on wood, from wood to paper and from the manuscript to the printing press. The obsolescence of traditional media demands a continuous reinvention of classic processes (production, distribution and exhibition). It is changing the way films are produced, distributed and marketed. This profound transformation is clearly perceptible in the emergence of a new market for the exploitation of audiovisual content (internet and mobile devices), the emergence of a new consumer profile (digital natives), and the democratization of the means of production (cameras, digital editors, post-production software).

Digital technology's impact on the process of "making" a film is obvious: it has made it possible to expand the boundaries of creativity and verisimilitude. The digitization of image and sound has created virtual characters that look irresistibly and plausibly real (Gollum in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, 2001-03; the Na'vi in James Cameron's *Avatar*, 2009) on both the big screen and other forms of audiovisual consumption (home TV, smart TV, HD and 3D). These technological advances have also brought forward a paradigm shift in production and distribution: the massive corporations that used to control the entire sector have been forced to make way for the internet, a

platform that dissolves boundaries in favor of independent film (*Paranormal Activity*, Oren Peli, 2007)[2]. The versatility of digital media has clearly changed every aspect of audiovisual creation.

This transformation in cinema also affects video games. The reason lies, to a large extent, in the way in which computer communication works. Traditionally, when we produce a text, image or sound we use a traditional alphabetic, iconic or musical code. A second type of codification emerged during industrialization: with the typewriter, we could press a key with a finger to activate a mechanism that pressed a band impregnated with ink on paper. However, the computer age required a third code: the digital system processor (computer, game console, mobile, etc.) translates our keyed or tactile message into a programming language that is subsequently decoded into text, images or sounds. Thus, we use a keyboard or screen to control the movements of characters in a video game: machine and programs are integrated in a single support. Since these numerical encryption and decryption processes are unperceivable, errors take us by surprise: we confuse the tool (the electronic apparatus) with the transmission of language (the programming code) and mistakenly think that we are the authors of the entire process[3]. Hence the fascination with computing and, consequently, its commercial success[4]. The gamer, who until now was merely a spectator, becomes part of the "miracle", until now only imagined, by using a simple manual or tactile gesture to intervene in the adventures.

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However, we must not forget our main focus: the myth.

I adopt, as a working hypothesis, the following definition of myth:

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[2] See Alejandro Pardo, "Cómo la digitalización está transformando la industria cinematográfica (1)", http://cine-hollywood-europa.blogspot.com.es/2014/06/como-la-digitalizacion-esta.html.

[3] See Diego Levis, "Videojuegos y alfabetización digital", *Aula de Innovación Educativa* (Barcelona), 147, Dec. 2005; http://aula.grao.com/revistas/aula/147-ensenar-lengua-oral-hoy/videojuegos-y-alfabetizacion-digital.

[4] Video games are the largest industry in audiovisual entertainment: $54 billion (2011), $75 billion (2016), $90 billion (estimates by Statista for 2020), https://www.statista.com.

> Explanatory, symbolic and dynamic account of one or various personal and extraordinary events with transcendent referent, that lacks in principle of historical testimony; is made up of a series of invariant elements reducible to themes submitted to crisis; that presents a conflictive, emotive and functional character, and always refers to an absolute cosmogony or eschatology, either particular or universal.

This definition will be matched with other less canonical definitions that result from the mythification of characters, places and historical events.

The following pages will focus on the study of the transformations of myth in our time; more specifically, they are meant to determine how the digital revolution –in particular film, television series and video games[5]– affects mythical stories[6].

2. Traditional Myths in Film

The adaptation of mythical narratives to film is undergoing an unprecedented revolution, particularly in today's day and age[7]. All the myths come into play here. The reasons behind this spectacular growth, the focus of cultural myth-criticism, are manifold: the ease of distribution that digitization has made possible, the breaking of frontiers through globalization, the exponential increase in consumption as a result of global economic improvement, etc. While bearing in mind the demands of our imaginary world, always ready to assimilate new stories that stir our emotions and our reason to improve our living conditions,

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[5] Of course, audiovisual creation also affects both traditional (theater, opera, ballet, etc.) and contemporary arts (installations, happenings, performances, etc.).

[6] Of particular interest in the relationship between digitization and myth is issue 15.1 of *Icono14* magazine, titled "Technopoïesis: Transmedia Mythologisation and the Unity of Knowledge". The thorough and erudite introduction by Asunción López-Varela Azcárate and Henry Sussman (p. 1-34; DOI: ri14.v15i1.1056), provides an overview of how "the development of mass media communication, and particularly the digital turn (the transformation of analogue into digital processes) has dramatically impacted the topographical and temporal aspects of representation at the individual and socio-cultural level". http://www.icono14.net/ojs/index.php /icono14/issue/view/15-1-17.

[7] The same can be said of the customary adaptation of myths to the visual arts, although it undoubtedly seems less "sensational" than the revolution experienced in the field of audiovisual creation.

these reasons serve to explain our past, understand the present and anticipate the future.

2.1. Classical Myths

The Classical myths hold a dominant place in the panorama of the myths, most traditionally illustrated through film.

I will refer to a big-screen blockbuster, a story about the adventures of Perseus and Andromeda. *Clash of the Titans* (Desmond Davis, 1981), known for producer Ray Harryhausen's use of the special effects technique of stop motion animation. The novel was published later that same year. Two sequels were recently released in 3D, the first under the same name (Louis Leterrier, 2010), and the second entitled *Wrath of the Titans* (Jonathan Liebesman, 2012).

The films essentially base their plots on the adventures of Perseus and Andromeda, boldly paired with the Hesiod's *Theogony* and Homer's *Odyssey*. This is neither the time nor the place to enter into details, yet I will touch upon an aspect relevant to cultural myth-criticism: immanence in the most recent production, *Wrath of the Titans*. In a scene that takes place in a cottage in a small fishing village, an elderly Zeus (a god sensitive, therefore, to the passage of time) has an interesting conversation with his son Perseus:

> I need your help… Perseus. […] There is a calamity coming. It will affect us all. Gods and men. The humans may have stopped praying to us […] Without prayer, we gods lose our power. When our power leaves us, all our work comes undone. All of it. The walls of Tartarus are falling. It is emptying all its demons onto the earth. […] If our power diminishes much further, we gods will become mortal. We will die and Kronos himself will escape. It will mean chaos. The end of the world[8].

Perseus refuses to help an impotent Zeus, who descends along with Poseidon to the underworld to ask Hades for help. With the help of Ares, Hades sidelines both and Perseus is forced to take action. If we look closely at these scenes, we observe a paradox typical of our time: the existence of the supernatural world (here represented by gods and

[8] http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=wrath-of-the-titans.

titans) is not self-sustaining, but rather depends on the belief that humans have in them. The world of gods and titans is thus reduced to human thought[9], and transcendence is merely psychological: if men think about gods, they survive; if men do not, they die. Divine immortality is the result of human mortality. Gods depend on men.

2.2. Germanic Myths

Greco-Roman mythology was so geographically widespread and so strongly backed by a powerful culture that the Church tried less to suppress it than to incorporate it into its catechism.

Based on the major milestones the Greek philosophers had expressed on the spiritual process, the Fathers of the Church and theologians established a true mystagogy (from Greek to Christian belief, from Christian belief to the healing of the soul, and from there to celestial eschatology)[10]. The same did not occur with the vernacular mythology of northern Europe, whose practice and oral tradition was eventually almost entirely eradicated through Christianization. Written materials, albeit suppressed, were fortunately largely preserved. Thus, *Beowulf* includes mythological elements, but references to the stories about the Germanic gods are arranged in a merely human heroic framework; the same can be said of the two *Merseburg Incantations* (*die Merseburger Zaubersprüche*, the only example of Germanic pagan beliefs saved in Old High German), which were preserved more for their healing properties than for their mythological narratives.

It all would have certainly been lost had it not been for a small island a thousand kilometers off the Norwegian coast: Iceland[11]. It was Christianized late (around 999), and its literature was mainly oral (an

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[9] "When your precious humans die, at least their souls go to another place. When a god dies, it isn't death. It's just absence. It's nothing", *ibid.*

[10] See Hugo Rahner, *Mitos griegos en interpretación cristiana*, prologue by Lluís Duch, translated by Carlota Rubies, Barcelona, Herder Editorial, 2003 [Munich, *Orden der Gesellschaft Jesu*, 1945].

[11] The same could be said of the Finnish Kalevala, the national epic, yet it was essentially compiled from Karelian traditions (Karelia is currently divided by Russia and Finland) taken from areas that were never part of the Finnish territory. I found all this information on Acad-Myth, an active discussion group on the study of myth, founded by Robert Segal (whom I thank for his invitation in 2011),

important fact as it was not considered "text"). The Icelanders exported a vast collection of courtly literature, deeply anchored in mythological references to kings and heroes, in the form of poetry to the royal courts of Scandinavia. The translation of these narratives started enthusiastically towards the late 12th century, only to became vernacular sagas around 1220, following the desire of the king of Norway.

The Edda and the courtly poetry of Snorri Sturluson serve as examples of poems that praised the king: they contain stories of gods, because knowledge of mythology was crucial for appreciating poetry. Encouraged by this Edda, many mythological poems were copied from the oral tradition alongside heroic poems (some of which were quoted by Snorri, and were thus known as Eddic poetry). As time went by, this mythology developed into a social phenomenon, to the point of competing with the classical mythology on a level inaccessible to other European mythologies (the Finnish Kalevala, the Celtic tradition, etc.).

Oddly enough, Norse mythology originates almost exclusively from medieval Iceland, which was later appropriated as a shared legacy by other Scandinavian peoples and subsequently by Germanic peoples. As a Germanic language, English also adopted Scandinavian mythology: Woden and Thunor were early Anglo-Saxon gods and thus included in popular narratives.

This Scandinavian mythology underwent an important revival during the rise of National Romanticism in the 19th century, when its symbolism was used to construct a national identity related to the Germanic languages: "a language, a people, a nation" implicitly implies "a mythology"[12]. This is why the Vikings were romanticized as free people,

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and actively managed by Steve Myers: http://www.acad-myth.org/index.php. The discussion on this mythology took place between the 13th and 18th of July 2017.

[12] The same happened in the 20th century, when Scandinavian mythology was identified with Nazi Germany. In this respect, it is significant that a Finnish group, founded in 2015 to prevent refugees from the migratory flows from Southern and Eastern Europe from settling in Finland, is called the "Soldiers of Odin" (SOO). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soldiers_of_Odin.

pure of heart, confident in their strength, rebellious against the hegemony of Christianity and indifferent to the constrictions of modern societies: Scandinavian mythology is one of the Viking symbols[13].

Certainly, no one believes they are adulterating precious mythological legacy when using myths for entertainment purposes, but it is a fact that the relationship between 13th century Icelandic traditions and their modern representation invites a reflection on the interpretative framework: it is evident that the mythical Norse models have suffered the effects of time more severely than classical mythology, solidly established by certain foundational texts *ne varietur*. The diverse and identified uses of Scandinavian mythology have generated a confusing breeding ground in which many people claim to identify, without there being clear boundaries between Wagner and the Marvel Universe's Thor comics. However, the Western mythological tradition has been greatly enriched by Scandinavian mythology.

There is no shortage of examples of Norse myths in films: *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Peter Jackson, 2001-03), based on the novel of the same name by J. R. R. Tolkien (1937-49), or, more recently, its prequel, the *The Hobbit* trilogy (Peter Jackson, 2012-14), also based on Tolkien's homonymous novel (1937) and in the appendices of *The Return of the King* (third volume of *The Lord of the Rings*). It is undeniable that these novels and their respective film adaptations draw inspiration from classical, Celtic, Finnish, Slavic and Persian mythologies; they are also inspired by the poem *Beowulf*, written in Old English by a Christian monk and one of the major texts of Scandinavian tradition. An example of this is a scene from the *Hobbit*: Bilbo's encounter with the dragon Smaug is crafted after a similar encounter in the Anglo-Saxon saga, when a slave wakes a dragon guarding a treasure; the wrath of the mythical animal in the film results in fire and carnage, the same destruction that the dragon in *Beowulf* causes on Geats (today Götaland, "land of the Geats", in Southern Sweden). Even small details reveal this influence: the astute reader and viewer notice that in both cases the fearless visitor to the dragon's lair carries a golden cup in his hands.

[13] Although in opposition to the current ramifications of Nazi ideology, Scandinavian mythology currently represents a sensational appeal for heavy metal bands and post-apocalyptic anarchist groups. The referential phenomenon is identical.

Films provide a host of other examples of mythical Scandinavian characters. The "Marvel Cinematic Universe" includes several films about the god of thunder: *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh, 2011), *Thor: The Dark World* (2013) and *Thor: Ragnarok* (Taika Waititi, 2017). Traces of this mythology can be found likewise in other films: the trolls in *The NeverEnding Story* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1984) and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Chris Columbus, 2001).

2.3. Biblical Myths

The relationship between myth and religion is an intimate one, almost as strong as the one between myth and literature or, to a lesser extent, between myth and art. There is no myth without religion. Religion, literature, psychology, logic, etc., are the main foundations upon which the mythical is created. Each, however, makes a different contribution: religion and literature are at the heart of myth, while psychology and logic come secondary. In this context, religion is at the root of all myths, because it is impossible to discuss myth in the scientific sense without personal or cosmic transcendence relative to an absolute cosmogony or eschatology (general or particular).

Neither religion nor myth-criticism have the same purpose, tools or end. Myth-criticism deals solely with myths (and its *a quo* or *ad quem* cultural reference), uses identifiable protocols and pursues an understanding of the world and of man through paths other than religion.

Another major epistemological precision should be added: the difference between dead and living religions. Perhaps there is no human sphere as sensitive as that of religion. As a result, the researcher should tread carefully when discussing the mythical manifestations of living religions, both out of prudence and respect and to avoid the tendency, common in the academic world, to apply empirical scientism to religion, mythology and literature.

Having said that, we can outline some brief notes on one of the main topics: biblical myths in film. *Noah* (Darren Aronofsky, 2014) recreates, with major box-office success, one of the main myths of all religions: the flood, i.e., a great deluge of water sent by a god or gods (1st mytheme) in response to human wickedness (2nd mytheme), for punitive purposes (3rd mytheme). Most flood myths include the announcement or threat (4th mytheme) and the human response, which

consists of building a ship that will save the lives of the hero, his relatives and part of life on earth (5th mytheme). We find mythical accounts in the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (the story of Utnapishtim, known as Ziusudra by the Sumerians and Atrahasis by the Akkadians), the Hindu *Shatapatha Brahmana* (Shraddhadeva Manu), the book of *Genesis* in the written *Torah* (story of Noah) and in the *Timaeus* by Plato[14].

Aronofsky's film masterfully combines environmental messages and emotional scenes interpreted by characters of heteroclite Hebrew provenances according to the film's needs (canonical books, apocrypha, traditions, etc.). God, fallen angels, Semites and Cainites help or battle each other while addressing the three major phases of the world: the ancient, the catastrophic and the present. It is particularly stricking to see how the mythemes of the flood seem to duplicate themselves: they are represented in different scenes through stories, memories, and dreams on the one hand; and through the film's plot development on the other. Thus, huddled around the fire on the ark Noah tell his wife Naamah[15], his three sons, and Illa the "story of all stories" about the beginning of the world (cosmogony, here taken from *Genesis* 1)[16], which links directly with original sin and the loss of human innocence. The consequent destruction that this infraction brings on the earth explains the imminent flood: "He's going to destroy the world", Noah says to

[14] Archeology and paleography have extensively demonstrated that at least one flood actually occurred in the Middle East around the third millennium BC. Nor is there any doubt that the Akkadian text preceded and inspired the Babylonian version. Science has yet to conclusively determine the identity between the flood described by the Akkadian, Sumerian and Babylonian texts and the flood in the Hebrew text, which certainly came later. See Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood. A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*, Grand Rapids (Michigan), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company & Carlisle (R.U.), The Paternoster Press, 1995, p. 226-243.

[15] The sister of Tubal-cain from *Genesis* 4:22, who the Midrashim compilation *Genesis Rabba* 23:3 identifies as the wife of Noah.

[16] "Let me tell you a story. The first story my father told me, and the first story that I told each of you. In the beginning, there was nothing, nothing but the silence of an infinite darkness, but the breath of the Creator fluttered against the face of the void, whispering, "Let there be light", and light was, and it was good. The first day…". http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=noah.

his wife. A touching scene, in which Noah teaches his son Ham –who just wanted the feel of a flower in his hands– the sustainable use and respect for the land, emphasizing the mission of Noah's family before and after the flood[17]. In short, a prolepsis (Noah's premonitory dream) announces the unstoppable threat of the universal flood. The five flood mythemes thus appear, through verbal discourse, at various moments in the film in order to announce or explain the flood itself, the source of the myth of Noah, which the viewer sees through nonverbal narrative discourse. One discourse repeats the other.

The main myth of this biblical character coexists with other myths in a film full of diabolical, cosmic and Edenic symbols. Thus, the story of the Devil tempting Adam and Eve, prior to the original fall, focuses on the snake, a symbol of Satan graphically repeated in the dreams of Noah. Yet the snake, wrapped around itself, also symbolizes the uroboros, that is, the eternal return, or the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. In two scenes, Lamec and his son Noah wrap a snakeskin around their arms: it is symbolic of the narrative in general, focused on the end of one world and the immediate beginning of another. This myth finds its perfect echo in the conversation between Noah and Illa, when an attack by Tubal-cain and his men already seems inevitable[18]. The same can be said of the earthly Paradise, represented in Noah's dream by two anthropomorphic lights (Adam and Eve) in the middle of a green and beautiful valley, next to a tree (the forbidden tree). In the film, Eden also converges towards this symbolism: no sooner does Noah plant a seed from that mythical garden, given to him by his grandfather Methuselah, than a magical forest blooms, that is, all the timber Noah needed to build the ark and save the world becomes available; the earthly Paradise, once gone, may rise again. And, together with the fall of the "first fathers", is the fall of the angels –

[17] "You see those other flowers? How they're attached to the ground? That's where they should be. They have a purpose, they sprout, and they bloom. The wind takes their seeds and more flowers grow. We only collect what we can use and what we need. Do you understand?".

[18] "[Illa:] Do you think those men are going to attack us? / [Noah:] When the rain comes. / [Illa:] What do you think it'll be like? / [Noah:] I've imagined it. Seeing that much death, I'm not sure there are words. / [Illa:] The end of everything. / [Noah:] The beginning. The beginning of everything".

confusingly evoked in the Old and New Testaments, and extensively developed in the apocryphal *II Enoch*, where they are identified with the "watchers"[19]. Their redemption, which is also the subject of apocryphal developments, is elegantly depicted in the manner in which they ascend into heaven after dying in combat defending the ark and Noah's family. The symbols refer, without words, to a much greater reality, a mythical account of the two worlds: this world and the one beyond.

3. Myth and Science Fiction in TV Series

3.1. Sci-Fi's Attempt at Usurpation

Another fundamental aspect concerns science fiction. Traditionally, myths have proposed "extreme" situations (humanity transcending the limits of its nature); they have also shown the consequences of such extremes. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, these situations have been provided to a great extent by science, which has thus taken over one of the main tasks attributed to mythical narratives: to answer mankind's greatest questions. This "usurpation" becomes all the more obvious in the case of science fiction[20]. A paradigmatic example is *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), a film in which the inventor Rotwang makes a robot to replace Hel, his former lover. However, Joh Fredersen, the city's master, uses the robot to provoke chaos and killing among the rebellious workers. The android transcends human limits: the loved one is "resurrected".

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[19] "And I saw there an immense host –the Watchers. Their appearance was like men's appearance; in size they were bigger than great giants, and their faces were sad, and their mouths silent. […] These are the Watchers, who […] went down to the earth and broke their vow on the shoulder of Mount Hermon to defile themselves with human women; and because they defiled themselves the Lord condemned them" (*II Enoch*, VII, 2-5; *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H. F. D. Sparks, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 334-335). They correctly appear with sad faces in the film: "We watched over Adam and Eve, saw their frailty and their love, and then we saw their fall, and we pitied them. We were not stone then, but light. It was not our place to interfere. Yet we chose to try, and help mankind, and when we disobeyed, the Creator he punished us".

[20] Rosa Fernández Urtasun, "La lógica emocional y la tensión entre la ciencia y el mito", *Myth and Emotions*, José Manuel Losada and Antonella Lipscomb (dir.), Newcastle upon Tyne (UK), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, p. 81-91 [p. 82].

However, this does not mean that the days of the mythical narrative are over. Given their dynamic character, myths have been able to adapt to this seemingly inhospitable environment: science fiction stories often contain cleverly camouflaged mythical narratives. As a result of this link between traditional myths and science fiction, the analytical work plays a more relevant role. An example, taken from a television series, will help us take another approach.

3.2. Updating Myth: *Westworld*

The ten episodes of the first season of the television series *Westworld* (Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy, 2016), sequel to the homonymous film (Michael Crichton, 1973), take place between Westworld, an American West theme park inhabited by androids and visited by wealthy clients looking for limitless, risk-free fun, and Delos Incorporated, which owns and operates the park. The series, one of HBO's biggest successes, brilliantly combines extraordinary ideas and special effects. Several plots intersect: the adventures that clients experience with the androids and gynoids (henceforth androids for all) –outlaws with a warrant for their arrest, prostitutes at the "Mariposa" saloon, Confederates on the fringes of the law–, the relentless drive of the "Man in Black" (Ed Harris) –a sadistic client who has spent 30 years trying to reach the center of the "maze"–, the business complications of the inventors and the owners of the company… But the myth-criticism researcher cannot limit himself to the analysis of the progressive convergence of all these plots; its task is rather to unravel the myth. There are at least three myths: the coexistence of two worlds, the creation of humans, and the maze.

3.2.1. The Coexistence of Two Worlds

First, *Westworld* boldly proposes the coexistence of two different worlds, one of them within the other. The series uses several methods to convey this coexistence: optical effects, disruptive references and audio-visual resources.

a) Optical effects. As early as the very first episode, when androids Teddy (James Marsden) and Dolores (Evan Rachel Wood), attacked by the Man in Black, begin to behave strangely, the Head of Programming Bernard Lowe (Jeffrey Wright) orders them to be removed from the park and analysed in the laboratory or "Remote Diagnostic Facility".

These two worlds are clearly explained via an optical effect in a scene with a single shot that zooms out: as the focus moves vertically away from the train traveling in the American West, the viewer sees that it is part of a scale model in the company's laboratory.

b) Disruptive reference or, more specifically, the tacit art of designating various referents through the same signifier. Both androids and Delos employees call the new visitors of the town of Sweetwater "newcomers", but only the viewer (us, not the company employee, who also observes) distinguishes between two types of "newcomers" depending on their behavior and origin. Some come from "outside" (actually from the laboratory), and others from the "other world" (our world); some are new androids or repaired androids while other are human clients. For the inhabitants of Sweetwater, all look the same physically (although androids can "die" but not kill humans instead). However, for the viewer, the origin is unquestionable: they all get off a train; but there are two different trains, one is a 19th century American West train that the androids take into town, and another modern one, the one from our world, which humans take to enter Westworld through hidden entrances.

c) Audiovisual resources. The pianola and the piano also unquestionably refer to the coexistence of two worlds. There are two instruments of music: the pianola in the "Mariposa" saloon, where several scenes (the other world) take place, and the piano in the opening credits of each episode (this world). The director employs the pianola –which contains a mechanism that operates according to a pre-programmed music recorded on perforated paper– to underline the relationship between the two worlds. The pianola in the "Mariposa" works and is heard in all episodes –by both hosts and the viewer–. The same could be said of the other instrument in the opening credits of each episode, when an android skeleton plays a piano that automatically continues playing when the fingers are lifted off the keys, just like a pianola, thus symbolizing the creation of independent life from inert matter.

3.2.2. The Creation of Humans

Secondly, *Westworld* offers an authentic modernization of the myth of Prometheus and the creation of man and, to a lesser extent, Pygmalion and Galatea; the difference, however, is that the creations in the Greek

myths were people (always part of the fictional world), and in the TV series the park's "mannequins" only appear to be real people. In this sense, the androids are nothing more than machines (in one scene, a client slices open Dolores's stomach with a knife to reveal the wires and electronics beneath). But in parallel with the "normal" androids, other types –Dolores, Maeve (Thandie Newton)– have developed an artificial intelligence and emotion that lead to an awakening of consciousness through fleeting memories and improvisations. This new development, a central plot in the series, is linked directly to the myth of the creation of man, updated by Mary Shelley in the character Frankenstein (*…or the New Prometheus*), who escapes the control of its inexperienced creator. A symbolic representation of this myth is found in *The Creation of Adam*, the famous painting in the Sistine Chapel painted by Michelangelo, and the one preferred in the series by Arnold, the deceased inventor of the park, along with Robert Fox (Anthony Hopkins), thirty years ago. Faced with the common assumption, Ford comments to Dolores at the end of the series that Michelangelo's work reveals that "the divine gift does not come from a higher power, but from our own mind"[21]. As the inventor concludes, it is a "metaphor" of independent consciousness.

This metaphor is, in fact, at the heart of Dolores and Maeve's stories. In spite of their pre-established identity –layers built over a backstory, as Elsie tells Stubbs in the third episode, *The Stray*– these two androids begin to react in a real human way. Several comments from Dolores clearly demonstrate this. 1) When Lowe suggests that he can take away the suffering caused by the death of her parents, Dolores responds, visibly excited: "Why would I want that? The pain, their loss it's all I have left of them" (ep. 4, *Dissonance Theory*)[22]. 2) When Ford insistently asks

[21] "The message being that the divine gift does not come from a higher power but from our own minds" (ep. 10, *The Bicameral Mind*).

[22] Maeve echoes the same answer when an engineer is about to erase her memory: "No, no, no, please. This pain it's all I have left of her" (i.e. her daughter, ep. 8, *Trace Decay*). Later, we witness the same discomfort from Bernand himself (who we now know is an android) when he discovers the identity of his son (another android) "This pain? The pain of your loss I long for it. […] But it's the only thing holding me back" (ep. 9, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*). These displays of intense emotion manifest the successive layers of backstory that shape the character of

her if she's been hearing voices from the person who created her, she complains: "You're – You're hurting me" (ep. 5, *Contrapasso*). 3) When the Confederates come to the city of Pariah to kill William (Jimmi Simpson) and Dolores, she tells him she will run away with him: "There's a voice inside me telling me what I have to do" (*ibid*.). These three emotional comments from Dolores are coupled with her rational perplexity, as when she meets characters who are identical to herself; or the rational bewilderment of Maeve, who, alarmed by flashbacks of previous deaths, is unable to find traces of these events on her current "build".

We have here, on both an emotional and rational level, the awakening of consciousness or, properly speaking, the unexpected development of an emotional consciousness and rational logic. How this creation has occurred is a matter of conjecture; it may be due to the combination of artificial intelligence, will, memory and imagination in exceptional circumstances. The contradiction is not operative in this case, because the viewer, drawn by the credibility of the story, is caught in the web of empathy towards the androids who progressively acquire human nature[23]. And it is here –precisely where the story introduces an individual cosmogony (the passage from mechanical existence to human existence)– where we find myth. First, there is myth because creation has a supernatural origin in Western tradition; secondly, because the transition from one existence to another suggests an infinite tension between two worlds, the inert and the biological.

3.2.3. The Maze

Unlike the two previous myths, which we see *in presentia* (both the coexistence of two worlds and the creation of human beings are narrated and presented), the myth of the maze is offered only as *representatio*: in

each android and provide consistency. We are shown the past of the three androids who discover their identity, thereby demonstrating that memory is part of their consciousness (or, rather, their progressive awareness), unlike the human characters, whose past is never revealed. It is one of the premises of Ford, one of the park's creators: "We can't define consciousness because consciousness does not exist" (ep. 8, *Trace Decay*).

[23] Viewers are similarly "dragged" in the film *Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013), when Theodore (Joaquin Phoenix) falls in love with Samantha, a "woman" designed by an operating system based on artificial intelligence.

Westworld, the myth of the maze plays a symbolic and referential role, but no maze *per se* appears.

As we know, Theseus saved his people from becoming tributes by entering the labyrinth of Crete to kill the Minotaur and using a string given to him by Ariadne to find his way out. The maze is seen repeatedly in *Westworld*: on a tarot card, on a branding iron, drawn on a plowed field and on several coffins. The characters deal with the maze in different ways. On one hand, humans have no qualms searching for a way in; the paradigmatic example is the Man in Black, who, after paying homage to classical Greece[24], scalps the Indian Kissy (Eddie Rouse) and finds a map of the maze on the scalp. The androids, on the other hand, search for the way to reach the center of the maze in order to escape the world of their dreams. Encouraged by a fortune-teller who shows her a deck of tarot cards, Dolores draws a card that represents a maze and immediately hears how the fortune-teller, who has transformed into a copy of herself, tells her to find the truth: "You must follow the maze" (ep. 5, *Contrapasso*). Moreover, as soon as she hears these words, Dolores discovers and begins to pull a string from her own arm, while the fortune-teller reveals the importance of her finding: "Perhaps you are unraveling" (*ibid*.); an explicit reference to the Cretan labyrinth[25]. The reference to the maze, although not verbal, is also explicit in another scene: out of the tangled forest and armed with a double-edged ax, an Indian throws himself at the Man in Black. The assault would be no more than an adventure, were it not for the fact that the Indian, whose face is never discovered, appears precisely disguised as a bull, complete with horns, and because his ax is a replica of *labrys* (λάβρυς, a double-edged ax specifically associated with the Minoan civilization) from which, according to widely accepted etymology, the intrincate Cretan maze derived its name…

[24] "…there's a deeper level to this game. You're gonna show me how to get there. A lot of wisdom in ancient cultures" (ep. 1, *The Original*).

[25] Ariadna "gathered up the string" ("*…filo est inuenta relecto*"), VIII, 173, writes Ovid in *Metamorphoses*, edited and translated to Spanish by Antonio Ruiz de Elvira, Madrid, C.S.I.C., 1994, 3 vols., II, p. 101.

However, according to the modern and postmodern subversion of myths[26], the series plays with the original elements of the mythical legacy. Who is Theseus? Teddy, who faces the Minotaur, whose role is symbolized in the series as the bloodthirsty Man in Black? The Man in Black, searching relentlessly for the entrance to the maze and leaving a trail of blood in his wake, including that of Dolores and Teddy? Dolores, who "spiritually" unravels the string until discovering, like Maeve, the reality of her own existence? There is no doubt that the adventures of *Westworld* imply, in an original hellish setting, a modern reproduction of the Cretan myth. The mystery of the maze is finally solved in the 10th episode. Here the maze is not represented in the form of a drawing, but as an object in which Arnold found solace after the death of his son (according to Ford) and which served as "a test of empathy, imagination" (ep. 10, *The Bicameral Mind*). When Dolores digs up her own grave (because the labyrinth of consciousness is "a journey into the center of herself"[27]), she finds the toy that belonged to Arnold's son: every choice has brought her to the center of the maze, to self-awareness. She thought she would be free when she discovered who she was[28]. However, she was wrong. As Ford reveals to her, by turning her into a substitute for her son, Arnold gave her an immortality that condemned her to suffer forever, with no possible escape, in the maze of her dreams[29]. In fact, it was Ford who, through Arnold's suicide, left

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[26] In this regard, another global blockbuster may also serve as an example: the dystopian triology of *The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross and Francis Lawrence, 2012-15), which addresses the same myth through a maze in which 24 tributes (12 young women, 12 young men) are forced to fight to the death until only one wins and escapes (see Nikitas Paterakis, "Weaving the Emotional Mitos within and without the Labyrinth: Politics of Emotion in the Myth of Theseus and *The Hunger Games*", *Myth and Emotions*, J. M. Losada & A. Lipscomb (dir.), Newcastle upon Tyne (UK), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, p. 233-240.

[27] This is what Bernard told Dolores: "Consciousness isn't a journey upward, but a journey inward. Not a pyramid, but a maze" (*ibid*.).

[28] This is what she said to Bernard: "And I think when I discover who I am, I'll be free" (ep. 3, *The Stray*).

[29] "The key was a simple update that he made to you called the reveries. […] So, he altered you, Dolores, merged you with a new character we had been developing. […] In you, Arnold found a new child. One who would never die. The thought gave him solace until he realized that same immortality would destine you to suffer with no escape, forever. I'm sorry, Dolores".

Dolores and Bernard trapped in their own dreams, just as they were gaining the consciousness needed to leave Westworld[30].

Paradoxically, the Man in Black makes an even bigger mistake. In the second episode, after going on a killing spree because no one would tell him the location of the maze, the daughter of the bandit Lawrence (Clifton Collins Jr.) tells the Man in Black that the maze is not meant for him[31]. Later, talking with Teddy, he says that "the maze revealed itself to me" when he observes the heroic act of Maeve sacrificing her life for her daughter while he kills her[32]. Nevertheless, this revelation is incomplete, fleeting, so he continues his quest. Then, the prostitute Angela (Talulah Riley) repeats to him that the maze is not meant for him[33]. Finally, in the last episode, when he reveals to Dolores that he is William (30 years have passed), she reminds him, again, that the maze was not designed for him[34]. However, the Man in Black refuses to take heed; at last, the creator of Westworld, Ford, convinces him that the maze was engineered only for the androids[35].

The series contains, therefore, three fundamental myths: the existence of two heterogeneous worlds (symbolized through trains, pianos, and visual effects like the zoom out), the creation of human beings (whose independence from their creator is represented in Michelangelo's painting) and the labyrinth or maze (a representation –first in drawings, then in a toy– of the process that the androids must follow to gain consciousness).

As in any other literary or audiovisual narrative, the myth includes events that occur in a space over time. However, the type of mythical

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[30] [Dolores:] "So, we're trapped here inside your dream" (ep. 10, *The Bicameral Mind*). In Ford's dreams, he was unwilling to give up his invention just before opening the park, in case they had definitely reached human consciousness. The only host that manages to leave Westworld is Maeve, who gets on the train used by the park guests; but, conscious-stricken by the memory of her daughter, who remains in the park, gets off the train at the last second. The journey to the world of humans is impossible.

[31] "The maze isn't meant for you" (ep. 2, *Chestnut*).

[32] "The maze isn't meant for you" (ep. 9, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*).

[33] "The maze wasn't meant for you" (ep. 10, *The Bicameral Mind*).

[34] "The maze wasn't meant for you" (ep. 10, *The Bicameral Mind*).

[35] "I tried to tell you the maze wasn't meant for you" (*ibid*.).

narrative differs considerably from other types of narrative: on the one hand, it reproduces two spaces that collide (the natural space and the supernatural or transcendent space, completely heterogeneous); on the other hand, the mythical account takes place in a time related to an absolute cosmogony or eschatology (whether particular or universal). Both conditions exist in *Westworld*, where two spaces (the natural world of Delos and the extraordinary world of Westworld, where each android "lives" in the most absolute ignorance of the real world) and two times (the natural one of Delos and the extraordinary one of Westworld, where each android "comes back to life", that is, is reset after a violent death or a configuration error). Myth does not exist in two heterogenous spaces and times, but in the coexistence of both; it is this coexistence that transforms the reader or viewer into an "amphibian" who lives between two worlds. *Westworld* is contextualized within a type of pseudocreative narrative: the gods produce men and men produce androids[36]. *Westworld*'s message in this respect is disconcerting: not so much because of the progressive humanization of the androids, the result of errors in their programming and a process unknown to the inventors (common resources in science fiction), but because of the ironic transference of moral categories; the truly normal and natural world is that of the androids, and the misleadingly abnormal and foreign world is that of the humans. The viewer understands it as such, and this acceptance of the message is deeply attributed to the interaction between science fiction and myth.

4. Myth and Fantasy in Video Games[37]

One of the fundamental aspects that must face the researcher of mythcriticism is the identification of myths, a task that may mistakenly

[36] The reference to the divine rule of Delos over Westworld is continuous throughout the series. I say "pseudocreative" because, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, authentic creation consists of creating something from nothing. Otherwise, androids (machines that execute movements similar to humans) would have been around since ancient times.

[37] I intentionally refrain from using "fantasy narrative" here, which would lead to confusion with the "fantasy genre" of the worlds where the character comes into contact with the strange and the sinister, unlike the fantasy of the magical and marvelous world (regarding the distinction between myth, fantasy, and the fantasy genre).

seem easy. Indeed, in a globalized multicultural environment, where the boundaries between fantasy and mythology are progressively blurred, researchers run the risk of likening myth to other notions and even of determining that characters are mythical when they are not. We will now have the opportunity to consider several video games in order to distinguish the myth of an important mental category in this format –fantasy– and its main vehicle –magic.

4.1. *Kingdom Hearts, Dark Souls, The Last Guardian*

In the different series of the numerous *Kingdom Hearts* games (Tetsuya Nomura, 2002-), players, who dress their characters in Disney-inspired outfits, must distinguish between beings with a heart (hence the overall title) or dark beings, known as "Heartless", who consume others' hearts. By wielding a mysterious weapon (the "keyblade"), players can attack or defend themselves from these strange creatures. The scenario is extremely diverse; it includes original worlds (Destiny Islands, Transit Town, etc.) and others taken from various sources (Wonderland, Olympus Coliseum, etc.).

In *Dark Souls* (Hidetaka Miyazaki, 2012), the beings of the First Flame, led by Gwyn, defeat almost all the dragons (animals whose scales make it possible for them to live forever) and begin the Fire Age, where they survive in an inhospitable environment. The player must level up by killing his enemies and using their souls in the different bonfires that populate the world of the game, that act as beacons and places to heal.

In *The Last Guardian* (Fumito Ueda, 2016), a boy becomes friends with Trico, a half-bird half-mammal creature similar to a griffin, and they both plan their way through the castle ruins, fighting the ghostly soldiers.

These and many other video games invent or reproduce imaginary adventures between gods, humans and animals, often originating in or related to mythology. Are we dealing with mythical or fantastic characters in these cases? The answer depends on the ability to distinguish myth from fantasy. One might ask: what is the meaning of the "hearts" in *Kingdom Hearts* and the dragons in *Dark Souls*? Or the meaning of the "human" understanding between the creature Trico and the protagonist in *The Last Guardian*? The answer also depends on the ability to

identify the mythical meaning of immortality, metamorphosis, and hybridization. As we see, a scientific approach to audiovisual creation goes beyond a superficial understanding of the narratives.

To eliminate any suspicion of partiality, let us switch gears for a moment and look at a game with a science fiction plot: *Æon Flux* (Kyle Richards, 2005), an adaptation of the cartoon (1995) and the homonymous film (Karyn Kusama, 2005), all based on the *Æon Flux* television series (Peter Chung, 1991). The story is set in 2415, when a disease annihilates the human race, except the survivors in the fortified city-state Bregna, where scientists found a cure for the virus. The player, Æon Flux, leader of the rebellion, is sent to kill the head of the government, but discovers a series of secrets that make them hesitate in his mission. We can hardly claim here to be talking about myth, even though the film and its sequels borrow their name from Gnosticism (the aeons are divine emanations) as well as the majority of its concepts (like the Demiurge and the *Suntelia Æon* –συντέλεια αἰών– that symbolizes the catastrophic end of one age and the beginning of another)[38]. The researcher's task is to understand the referential function of the myth in an amythic context, that is, elucidate why the videogame creator resorts to the myths of the demiurge and the eternal return in a work deprived of mythical plot and significance.

4.2. The *One Piece* Example

One Piece, universally famous in the world of manganime, will undoubtedly help us delve deeper into the issue[39]. In a time period known as the "Great Pirate Era", Gold Roger, before his execution, encourages anyone who dares to embark for the dangerous Grand Line Sea in

[38] Alison Veneto, "*Æon Flux*: All You've Ever Needed From Sci-Fi", 2006, http://www.smrt-tv.com/v2-15/column_scifi.html and Nina Munteanu, "Aeon Flux: Motion Picture & Animation–Review", 2008, http://sfgirl-thealiennextdoor.blogspot.com.es/2008/05/aeon-flux-motion-picture-animation.html.

[39] The manga *One Piece*, written and illustrated by Eiichiro Oda, has been serialized in the Japanese magazine *Weekly Shōnen Jump* since July 1997 (873 chapters to date). The anime has been broadcast on Fuji TV since October 1999 (797 episodes to date). The video game has been distributed in numerous formats by Bandai Namco Entertainment Inc. since July 2000 (40 games to date). I found this information on several Wikipedia pages.

search of Raftel Island, where he has hidden his treasure. Luffy, a carefree boy who dreams of becoming king of the pirates, eats a strange fruit (the "paramecia"[40] type) and immediately turns into a rubber man (hence the name, since he is transformed into a "one piece" character). Luffy-One Piece will have his wish granted thanks to this new power. Where is the myth here? More than one participant might be tempted to make an analysis of the "myth of Luffy" just as others have done with the "myth of Galatea": does not the marble of the statue carved by Pygmalion become flesh and bone? What is the difference between stone and rubber? These questions are poorly worded. The problem is not solved by a simple comparison between this story and an authentic myth, because the difference is not in the material (unknown, incidentally, in classical times). Myths may contain situations of magic and fantasy (as a matter of principle, the limits of human nature are exceeded in all), but fantasy is not a guarantee of myth; myth requires an absolute cosmogony or eschatology, whether personal or universal, and a supernatural transcendence, whether cosmic or personal. As for example: Tristan and Isolde, Pygmalion and Galatea and even the following, taken from an ancient study on the exact location of the island of Avalon:

> Taliesin, the great Welsh Druid, was stolen by an Irish pirate vessel of the period, but he escaped in a magic coracle before reaching Erin. "The Land beneath the Sea" was beyond Cardigan Bay, the Annwn of the old Sun. The Welsh Avalon, or Island of Apples, the everlasting source of the Elixir of Life, the home of Arthur and other mythological heroes, was in the Irish direction[41].

The example comes in handy: because of its reference to piracy, the sea and, above all, Avalon. Closely related to the myth of Arthur (here is the person), apples grow on this island, a fruit that gives the island its name (*aball* in ancient Irish, *Afallach* in Middle Welsh, *apple* in modern English), enough apples to survive for at least a hundred years; similar or superior magical virtues are found in the golden apples of the Garden of Hesperides. Compared to the world of Luffy, whose

[40] *One Piece Manga*, 27, 252, p. 7 (*Weekly Shōnen Jump*, Shueisha Publishing, 2002, No 49).

[41] *Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions*, James Bonwick, London, Griffith, Farrand & Co., 1894, p. 294.

extraordinary elasticity is only material, in the world of Avalon the "stretching out" of life implies immortality; and we know that where there is cosmic or personal immortality (a version of eschatology), there is also myth.

The best example of the magical and mythical effects of a fruit is undoubtedly found in the Old Testament: a serpent (Satan) offers Eve a forbidden fruit (an apple, according to popular fantasy) with a magical effect: "your eyes will be open, and you will be like God" (*Genesis* 3:5). Seduced, Adam and Eve eat the apple: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked" (*Genesis* 3:7), in other words, they awoke the consciousness of evil. The consequence of this fall is immediate:

> To the man he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it', cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (*Genesis* 3:16-19).

Also unlike the plastic effect in *One Piece*, there is a myth here: a higher personal power introduces the characters into another cosmogonic order, as they both lose the preternatural gifts (in accordance with it, but not required by human nature: integrity, immortality, impassibility, perfect mastery over creation, and remarkable wisdom). Since then, men must suffer to extract the fruits of the earth. This is not the case in *One Piece*, where the mere eating of fruit produces a fantastic effect (visual, material) in the world of fiction (without leaving the immanence, without relying on a supernatural world and without consequence on the origin or absolute end of its characters). The plasticity of Luffy coincides, essentially, with the seven-league boots in the tale Tom Thumb; we are still in the fantasy. From an academic and scientific perspective, there is only myth when an extraordinary event reveals a world of supernatural transcendence (personal or cosmic), which leads, as if by hand, to an absolute (particular or general) cosmogony. Complex? No one said that science is simple; its explanation should be simple and clear, otherwise it would not be science.

Having said that, it cannot be categorically stated that the manga *One Piece* does not include any reference to myths. The "Pirate Empress", Boa Hancock, who governs the Kuja tribe with her Gorgon sisters (Boa Sandersonia and Boa Marigold), and whose beauty is compared to that of the sirens, has many similarities with Medusa (the general snake theme, her ability to turn her enemies into stone, the involuntary character of her origin) and Calypso (her island is inhabited only by women, and she is irresistible to men except one –Luffy instead of Ulysses–)[42]. These classical myths lay a referential, albeit indispensable role in the plot organized around Luffy, a fantasy character; it may not be a strong enough argument to determine that this is the "myth" of Luffy.

4.3. The Shift in Tone

In the case of video games, it is necessary to reflect on the new modulation myths receive. Ancestrally related to the most extraordinary events of human life, myths can be labeled as significant moments: birth, the rites of passage from puberty to adulthood, death, direct contact with the divine, the decline of the gods or kingdoms – all entail "serious" consideration, often terrifying and never taken lightly or in jest. The contact with the transcendent world always provokes a shock in humans, if not anguish, panic or fear. Hence, the best-known myths are frequently subjected to parody (*Le Virgile travesti*, by Scarron and *Ulysses*, by Joyce): parody, like laughter, is one of the most helpful resources against fear and heavy significance. The transfer of a serious and consistent world, such as the supernatural, to a temporary and ephemeral format (for example, a "trivial" game between gamer and machine), opens interesting fields of analysis of the reception of myth in an *a priori* playful context.

Today, this interaction between the receiver and new formats transgresses all the limits of the traditional story-telling: exhibitions, installations, performances and happenings lend themselves to experiences in which the visitor takes the initiative, not only of the order but also of the way objects are shown. Here the rules of "totality" and "linearity" become meaningless: there is no pre-established story. This new way of seeing, reading and feeling (intimately linked to the poetics of

[42] http://onepiece.wikia.com/wiki/Boa_Hancock.

the fragment) is preponderant in video games that favor player creativity: it is the player who chooses the elements, who arranges the sequences and who shapes "their" story. An enormously successful example is *Her Story* (Sam Barlow, 2015), a game in which players search and sort through a database of video clips from fictional police interviews, and use the clips to solve the mysterious death of Simon, Hannah Smith's (Viva Seifert) husband[43]. The question arises about the innovation that introduces this kind of interaction in the field of myths, where, traditionally, the character is simply the recipient of a divine message or, at most, carries out a supernatural destiny.

[43] In this regard, see no. 9 (2018) of the *Revue Sciences du Jeu* (http://sdj.revues.org/), directed by Sébastien Genvo, "Du ludique au narratif. Enjeux narratologiques des jeux vidéo" (https://journals.openedition.org/sdj/894).